

May 17, 2004

IN HONOR OF *BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in the case of Brown v. Board of Education. Fifty years ago today, Chief Justice Earl Warren announced that, under the Constitution, education is "a right which must be made available to all on equal terms." That ruling paved the way for the end of legal segregation; it affirmed the truth that we all knew in our hearts-that separate can never be equal.

In only 2,000 words, Chief Justice Warren changed the course of our nation for the better. It took the Chief Justice only a few minutes to read the ruling, but his words are still echoing in every classroom throughout the country. His words reverberated through the Supreme Court's marble halls and flowed into public school hallways. Those words continued to carry across the land by drawing power from the hope they gave to the people who heard them. They were a promise that every child would have the same opportunity to receive an education and, even more importantly, that every person would have the opportunity to shape and contribute to our society's future.

The Brown v. Board of Education ruling was a crucial step on our way to becoming a more just society. We still have a very long way to go, but we cannot let the length of the road ahead of us discourage us. The Brown v. Board of Education ruling put the power of the law behind the fight for racial equality. It was a legal ruling that did so much more than end legal segregation in schools; it promised all Americans the right to participate in the "American dream."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) carefully formed a strategy to boldly challenge the Constitutionality of segregation. Linda Brown represented the millions of children suffering from the effects of segregation, and her father, Oliver Brown, represented the millions of parents who believed that their children deserved better. Civil rights advocates used the Supreme Court's ruling on education to challenge discrimination in transportation, voting practices, housing and other parts of our society. The effort to win legal rights also gave birth to Dr. Martin Luther King's powerful dream of an America where all people are free from the scars of discrimination.

□□□□□□□□□□ Today, we celebrate the courage and conviction of those who stood up for their rights and helped to bring about the great victory of the Brown v. Board of Education decision.□ Today we also must join together to reaffirm our commitment to equality and to work so that all Americans have a real opportunity to reach their full potential.□ The goal of achieving equal opportunity requires us to continue to fight for justice and equality.□ It also requires that we expand opportunity by providing adequate funding for quality, public education; creating good jobs; ending health disparities; and guaranteeing full access to the ballot booth in practice as well as in theory.

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